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I get to hear a part of myself between those lines."
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Cambridge, Massachusetts

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--Scott Ray

San Diego, California

AY OF THE

PEACEFUL WARRIOR

A Book that Changes Lives

WDAN MILLMAN

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Tiburon, California

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Berkeley, California

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To the Ultimate Warrior of Peace, of
whom Socrates is but a twinkling reflectionnWho
has no name yet many, and Who
is the Source of us all.

TO OUR READERS

The books we publish are our contribution to an emerging world based on cooperation rather than on competition, on affirmation of the human spirit rather than on self-doubt, and on the certainty that all humanity is connected. Our goal is to touch as many lives as possible with a message of hope for a better world.

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My heart-felt gratitude to my wife, Joy, who has energized my spirit all along, and to my parents, Herman and Vivian Millman, whose love and faith gave me the courage to begin the Way.

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Michael Bookbinder, a brother, teacher, friend, catalyst, "cheerleader to the soul"--part of a larger mission,

And of course, there's Soc.

Preface

An extraordinary series of events took place in my life, beginning in December 1966, during my junior year at the University of California at Berkeley. It all began at 3:20 A.M., when I first stumbled upon Socrates in an all-night gas station. (He didn't volunteer his real name, but after spending time with him that first night, I named him on impulse after the ancient Greek sage; he liked the name, so it stuck.) That chance encounter and the adventures that followed were to transform my life.

The years prior to 1966 had smiled upon me. Raised by loving parents in a secure environment, I was later to win the World Trampoline Championship in London, travel through Europe, and receive many honors. Life brought rewards, but no lasting peace or satisfaction.

Now I realize that I had, in a sense, been sleeping all those years and just dreaming I was awake--until I met Socrates, who came to be my mentor and friend. Before that time, I'd always believed that a life of quality, enjoyment, and wisdom were my human birthright and would be automatically bestowed upon me as time passed. I never suspected that I would have to learn how to live--that there were specific disciplines and ways of seeing the world I had to master before I could awaken to a simple happy, uncomplicated life.

Socrates showed me the error of my ways by contrasting them with his way, the Way of the Peaceful Warrior. He constantly poked fun at my own serious, concerned, problematic life, until I came to see through his eyes of wisdom, compassion, and

humor. And he never let up until I discovered what it means to live as a warrior.

Often I sat with him far into the early morning hours-- listening to him, arguing with him, and, in spite of myself, laughing with him. This story is based on my adventure, but it is a novel. The man I called Socrates did, in fact, exist Yet he had a way of blending into the word, so it's been difficult at times to tell where he left off and other teachers and life experiences began. I have taken liberties with the dialogue and with some time sequences and have sprinkled anecdotes and metaphors into the story to highlight the lessons Socrates would want me to convey.

Life is not a private affair. A story and its lessons are only made useful if shared. So I've chosen to honor my teacher by sharing his piercing wisdom and humor with you.

Warriors, warriors we call ourselves.
We fight for splendid virtue, for
high endeavor, for sublime wisdom,
therefore we call ourselves warriors.

--AUNGUTTARANIKAYA

The Gas Station
at Rainbow's End

Life begins," I thought, as I waved goodbye to morn and dad
and pulled away from the curb in my reliable old Valiant, its faded
white body stuffed with the belongings I'd packed for my first year
at college. I felt strong, independent, ready for anything.

Singing to myself above the radio's music, I sped North across
the freeways of Los Angeles, then up and over the Grapevine, connecting
with Route 99, which carried me through the green agricultural
flatlands stretching to the foot of the San Gabriel Mountains.

Just before dusk, my winding descent through the Oakland hills
brought me a shimmering view of San Francisco Bay. My excitement
grew as I neared the Berkeley campus.

After finding my dormitory, I unpacked and gazed out the window
at the Golden Gate Bridge and the lights of San Francisco
sparkling in the darkness.

Five minutes later I was walking along Telegraph Avenue, looking
in shop windows, breathing the fresh Northern California air,
savoring the smells drifting out of tiny caf6s. Overwhelmed by it all, I walked the beautifully landscaped paths of the campus until
after midnight.

The next morning, immediately after breakfast, I walked down to
Harmon Gymnasium, where I'd be training six days a week, four
muscle-straining, somersaulting, sweaty hours each day, pursuing.
my dreams of becoming a champion.

Two days passed, and I was already drowning in a sea of 15eoplo,
papers, and class schedules. Soon the months blended together,
passing and changing softly, like the mild California seasons. In
my classes I survived; in the gym, I thrived. A friend once told m
I was born to be an acrobat. I certainly looked the part: clean cut,

short brown halt, a lean, wiry body. I'd always had a penchant for daredevil stunts; even as a child I enjoyed playing on the edge of fear. The gymnastics room had become my sanctuary, where 1 found excitement, challenge, and a measure of satisfaction.

By the end of my first two years I had flown to Germany, France, and England, representing the United States Gymnastics Federation. I won the World Trampoline Championship; my gymnastics trophies were piling up in the corner of my room; my pie ture appeared in the Daily Californian with such regularity that people began to recognize me, and my reputation grew. Women smiled at me. Susie, a savory, unfailingly sweet friend with short blond hair and a toothpaste smile, paid me amorous visits more and more often. Even my studies were going well! I felt on top of tho world.

However, in the early autumn of 1966, my junior year, something dark and intangible began to take shape. By then I'd moved out of the dorm and was living alone in a small studio behind my landlord's house. During this time I felt a growing melancholy, even in the midst of all my achievements. Shortly thereafter, the nightmares started. Nearly every night I jerked awake, sweating. Almost always, the dream was the same:

I walk along a dark city street; tall buildings without doors or windows loom at me through a dark swirling mist.

A towering shape cloaked in black strides toward me. I feel rather than see a chilling specter, a gleaming white skull with black eye sockets that stare at me in deathly silence. A finger of white bone points at me; the white knucklebones cud into a beckoning claw. I freeze.

A white-haired man appears from behind the hooded terror; his face is calm and unlined. His footsteps make no sound. I senso somehow, that he is my only hope of escape; he has the power to save me, but he doesn't see me and I can't call to him.

Mocking my fear, the black-hooded Death whirls around to faeo the white-haired man, who laughs in his face. Stunned, I watch. Death furiously makes a grab for him. The next moment the specter is hurtling toward me, as the old man seizes him by his cloak and tosses him into the air.

Suddenly the Grim Reaper vanishes. The man with the shining

white hair looks at me and holds out his hands in a gesture-of welcome. I walk toward him, then directly into him, dissolving into his body. When I look down at myself, I see that I'm wearing a black robe. I raise my hands and see bleached white, znarled bones, come together in prayer.

I'd wake up screaming softly.

One night, early in December, I lay in bed listening to the howling wind driving through a small crack in the window of my apartment. Sleepless, I got up and threw on my faded Levis, a T-shirt, sneakers, and down jacket, and walked out into the night. It was

3;05 A.M.

I walked aimlessly, inhaling deeply the moist, chilly air, looking Ip into the star-lit sky, listening for a rare sound in the silent streets. The cold made me hungry, so I headed for an all-night gas station to buy some cookies and a soft drink. Hands in my pockets, I hurried across campus, past sleeping houses, before I came to the lights of the service station. It was a bright fluorescent oasis in a darkened wilderness of closed food joints, shops, and movie theaters.

I rounded the corner of the garage adjoining the station and nearly fell over a man sitting in the shadows, leaning his chair back against the red tile station wall. Startled, I retreated. He was wearing a red wool cap, grey corduroy pants, white socks, and Japanese sandals. He seemed comfortable enough in a lighl windbreaker though the wall thermometer by his head registered 38 degrees.

Without looking up, he said in a strong, almost musical voice, "Sorry if I frightened you."

"Oh, nh, that's okay. Do you have any soda pop?"

"Only have fruit juice here. And don't call me 'Pop'!" He turned toward me and with a half smile removed his cap, revealing shining white hair. Then he laughed.

That laugh! I stared blankly at him for one more moment. He was the old man in my dream! The white hair, the clear, unlined face, a tall slim man of fifty or sixty years old. He laughed again. In my confusion I somehow found my way to the door marked "Office" and pushed it open. Along with the office door, I had felt another door opening to another dimension. I collapsed onto an old couch, and shivered, wondering what might come screaming

through that door into my orderly world. My dread was mixed with a strange fascination that I couldn't fathom. I sat, breathing shallowly, trying to regain my previous hold on the ordinary world.

I looked around the office. It was so different from the sterility and disarray of the usual gas station. The couch I was sitting on was covered by a faded but colorful Mexican blanket. To my left, near the entryway, stood a case of neatly organized traveler's aids: maps, fuses, sun glasses, and so on. Behind a small, dark brown walnut desk was an earth-colored, corduroy-upholstered chair. A spring water dispenser guarded a door marked "Private." Near me was a second door that led to the garage.

What struck me most of all was the homelike atmosphere of the room. A bright yellow shag rug ran its length, stopping just short of the welcome mat at the entry. The walls had recently been painted white, and a few landscape paintings lent them color. The soft incandescent glow of, the lights calmed me. It was a relaxing contrast to the fluorescent glare outside. Overall, the room felt warm, orderly, and secure.

How could I have known that it was to be a place of unpredictable adventure, magic, terror, and romance? I only thought then, "A fireplace would fit in nicely here."

Soon my breathing had relaxed, and my mind, if not content, had at least stopped whirling. This white-haired man's resemblance to the man in my dream was surely a coincidence. With a sigh, I stood, zipped up my jacket, and sallied forth into the chill air.

He was still sitting there. As I walked past and stole a last quick look at his face, a glimmer in his eyes caught mine. His eyes were like none I'd seen before. At first they seemed to have tears in them, ready to spill over; then the tears turned to a twinkle, like a reflection of the starlight. I was drawn deeper into his gaze until the stars themselves became only a reflection of his eyes. I was lost for a time, seeing nothing but those eyes, the unyielding and curious eyes of an infant.

I don't know.how long I stood there; it could have been seconds or minutes--maybe longer. With a start, I became aware of where I was. Mumbling a goodnight, feeling off balance, I hurried toward the corner.

When I reached the curb, I stopped. My neck tingled; I felt that

he was watching me. I glanced back. No more than fifteen seconds had passed. But there he was, standing on the roof, his arms crossed, looking up at the starry sky! I gaped at the empty chair still leaning back against the wall, then up again. It was impossible! If he had been changing a wheel on a carriage made from a giant pumpkin drawn by huge mice, the effect couldn't have been any more startling.

In the stillness of the night, I stared up at his lean shape, an imposing presence, even at a distance. I heard the stars chime like bells singing in the wind. Suddenly, he snapped his head around and stared directly into my eyes. He was about sixty feet away, but I could almost feel his breath on my face. I shivered, but not from the cold. That doorway, where reality dissolved into dreams, cracked open again.

I looked up at him. "Yes?" he said. "Can I help you?" Prophetic words!

"Excuse me, but..."

"You are excused," he smiled. I felt my face flush; this was starting to irritate me. He was playing a game with me, but I didn't know the rules.

"All right, how did you get up on the roof?"

"Get up on the roof?" he queried, looking innocent and puzzled. "Yes. How did you get from that chair," I pointed, "up to that roof, in less than twenty seconds? You were leaning back against the wall, right there. I turned, walked over to the corner, and you . . ."

"I know exactly what I was doing," his voice boomed. "There is no need to describe it to me. The question is, do you know what you were doing?"

"Of course I know what I was doing!" I was getting angry now; I wasn't some child to be lectured to! But I desperately wanted to find out the old man's gimmick, so I held my temper and requested politely, "Please, sir, tell me how you got up on the roof."

He just stared down at me in silence until the badk of my neck began to get prickly. Finally he replied, "Used a ladder. It's around back." Then, ignoring me, he looked upward again.

I walked quickly around back. Sure enough, there was an old ladder, leaning crookedly against the back wall. But the ladder's

top was at least five feet short of the roof's edge; even if he could have used it--which was highly doubtfulothat wouldn't explain how he got up there in a few seconds.

Something landed on my shoulder in the darkness. I gasped, and whirled around to see his hand. Somehow, he'd gotten off the roof and crept up on me. Then I guessed the only possible answer. He had a twin! They obviously got their kicks scaring the wits out of innocent visitors. I accused him immediately.

"All right, Mister, where's your twin? I'm nobody's fool."

He frowned slightly, then started to roar with laughter. Hah! That clinched it. I was right; I'd found him out. But his answer made me less sure of myself.

"If I had a twin, do you think I'd be wasting my time standing here, talking with 'nobody's fool'?" He laughed again and strode back towards the garage, leaving me standing open-mouthed. I couldn't believe the nerve of this guy.

I hurried to catch up with him. He walked into the garage and started to tinker with a carburetor under the hood of an old green Ford pickup. "So I'm a fool, huh?" I said, sounding even more belligerent than I'd intended.

"We're all fools together," he replied. "It's just that a few people know it; others don't. You seem to be one of the latter types. Hand me that small wrench, will you?"'

I handed him his damn wrench and started to leave. Before I left, though, I had to know. "Please, tell me, how did you get up to the roof so fast? I'm really puzzled."

He handed me back the wrench, saying, "The world's a puzzle; no need to make sense out of it." He pointed to the shelf behind me. I'll need the hammer and the screwdriver now, over there."

Frustrated, I watched him for another minute, trying to figure out how to get him to tell me what I wanted to know, but he seemed oblivious to my presence. I gave up and started toward the door when I heard him say, "Don't go." He wasn't pleading; he wasn't commanding. It was a matter-of-fact statement. I looked at him; his eyes were soft.

"Why shouldn't I go?"

"I may be useful to you," he said, deftly removing the carburetor like a surgeon in the middle of a heart transplant. He set it down carefully, and turned to face me,

I was gaping at him..

"'Here," he said, handing me the carburetor. "Take this apart and put the pieces in that can to soak. It will take your mind off ,our questions."

My frustration dissolved into laughter. This old man could be offensive, but he was interesting, too. I decided to be sociable.

"'My name's Dan," I said, reaching out to shake his hand, smiling insincerely. "What's yours?"

He placed a screwdriver in my outstretched hand. "My name doesn't matter; neither does yours. What is important is what lies beyond names and beyond questions. Now, you will need this screwdriver to take apart that carburetor," he pointed.

"'Nothing lies beyond questions," I retorted. "Like how did you fly up on that rooftop?"

"I didn't fly--I jumped," was his poker-faced reply. It's not magic, so don't get your hopes up. In your case, however, I may have to perform some very difficult magic. It looks as if I'm going to have to transform a jackass into a human being."

"Who the hell do you think you are, anyway, to be saying these things to me?"

"I am a warrior!" he snapped. "Beyond that, who i am depends on who you want me to be."

"Can't you just answer a straight question?' I attacked the carburetor with a vengeance.

"Ask me one and I'll try," he said, smiling innocently. The screwdriver slipped and I skinned my finger. "Damn!" I yelled, going to the sink to wash the cut. Socrates handed me a BandAid.

"All
right then. Here is a straight question." I determined to keep my voice patient. "How can you be useful to me?"

"I have already been useful to you," he replied, pointing to the bandage on my finger.

That did it. "Look, I can't waste my time here any longer. I need to get some sleep." I put the carburetor down and got ready to leave.

"How do you know you haven't been asleep your whole life? How do you know you're not asleep right now?" he intoned, a twinkle in his eye.

"Whatever you say." I was too tired to argue anymore. "One

thlng, though. Before I leave, will you tell me how you pulled off that stunt earlier?"

He walked up to me, reached out, and grasped my hand. °"Tomorrow, Dan, tomorrow." He smiled warmly, and all my earlier fear and frustration were washed away. My hand, my arm, then my whole body started to tingle. He added, "It's been pleasant seeing you again."

"'What do you mean 'agaln'?" I began, then caught myself; "I know, tomorrow, tomorrow." We both laughed. I walked to the door, stopped, turned, stared at him, then said, "Goodbye--- Socrates."

He looked bewildered, then shrugged good-naturedly. I think he fiked the name. I left without another word.

I slept through my eight o'clock class the next morning. By the time my afternoon gymnastic workout started, I was awake and ready to go.

After running up and down the bleacher stairs, Rick, Sid, and I, along with our teammates, lay on the floor, sweating and panting, stretching our legs, shoulders, and backs. Usually I was silent during this ritual, but today I felt like telling them about last night. All I could say was, "I met this unusual guy at a gas station last night."

My friends were more involved with the stretching pain in their legs than in my little stories.

We warmed up easily, doing a few handstand push-ups, some sit-ups, and leg raises, and then began our tumbling series. As I flew through the air again and again--as I swung around the high bar, did scissors on the pommel horse, and struggled through a new muscle-straining ring routine--I wondered about the mysterious feats of the man I'd named "Socrates." My ruffled feelings urged me to avoid him, but I had to make sense out of this enigmatic character.

After dinner, I quickly read through my history and psychology assigninents, wrote a rough draft of an English paper, and raced out of the apartment. It was 11:00 '.M. Doubts began to.plague me as I neared the station. Did he really want to see me again? What could I say to impress upon him the fact that I was a highly intelligent person?

He was there, standing in the doorway. He bowed, and with a

wave of his arm welcomed me into his office. "Please, remove ,our shoes--a custom of mine."

I sat down on the couch and put my shoes nearby, in case I wanted to make a hasty exit. I still didn't trust this mysterious stranger.

It was starting to rain outside. The color and warmth of the office was a comfortable contrast to the dark night and ominous clouds outside. I started to feel at ease. Leaning back, I said, "You know, Socrates, I feel as though I've met you before."

"You have," he answered, again opening the doorway in my mind where dreams and reality became one. I paused.

"Uh, Socrates, I've been having this dream--you're in it." I watched him carefully, but his face revealed nothing.

"I've been in many people's dreams; so have you. Tell me about ,our dream," he smiled.

I told him, in as much detail as I could remember. The room seemed to darken as the terrible scenes became vivid in my mind, and my familiar world began to recede,

After I finished, he said, "Yes, a very good dream." Before I could ask him what he meant by that, the station bell clanged, and clanged again. He put on a poncho and went outside into the wet night. I stared out the window, watching him.

It was a busy time of evening: the Friday-night rush. Things got pretty hectic, with one customer driving in after another. I felt silly just sitting there so I went out to help him, but he didn't seem to notice me.

An endless line of cars greeted me: two-tones, reds, greens, blacks, hard-tops, pickups, and foreign sports cars. The moods of the customers varied as much as their cars. Only one or two people seemed to know Socrates, but many people looked twice at him, as if noticing something odd but indefinable.

Some of the people were in a party mood, laughing loudly and blaring their radios while we waited on them. Socrates laughed right along with them. One or two customers were sullen, putting forth a special effort to be unpleasant, but Socrates treated one and all with the same courtesymas if each person were his personal guest.

After midnight, the cars and customers became more scarce. The cool air seemed unnaturally still after having been filled with ran

cous noise and activity. As we entered the office, Socrates thanked me for my assistance. I shrugged it off but was pleased that he'd noticed. It had been a long time since I'd helped an),one with anything.

Once inside the warm office, I remembered our unfinished business. I started talking as soon as I flopped onto the couch. "Socrates, I have a couple of questions."

He held his hands in a gesture of prayer, looking upwards to the

office ceiling as if asking for divine guidance--or divine patience. "What," he sighed, "are your questions?"

"Well, I still want to know about the roof, and why you said, 'I'm pleased to see you again,' and I want to know what I can do for you and how you can be useful to me. And, I want to know how old you are."

"Let's take the easiest one, for now. I'm ninety-six years old, by your time." He was not ninety-six. Fifty-six, maybe; sixty-six at the outside; seventy-six, possible but amazing. But ninety-six? He was lying--but why would he lie? And I had to find about the other thing he had let slip, too.

"Socrates, what do you mean 'by your time'? Are you on East em Standard Time or are you," I joked feebly, "from outer space?"

"Isn't everyone?" he replied. By then, I had already considered that as a distinct possibility. :

"I still want to know what we can do for each other."

"Just this: I wouldn't mind having one last student, and you obviously need a teacher."

"I have enough teachers," I said too quickly.

"Oh, do you?" He pausea "Whether you have a proper teacher or not depends upon what you want to learn." He rose lightly from his chair and walked to the door. "Come with me. I want to show you something."

We walked to the corner, from where we could see down the avenue to the lights of he business district and beyond them to the lights of San Francisco.

"The world out there," he said, waving his arm across the horizon, "is a school, Dan. Life is the only real teacher. It offers many experiences, and if experience alone brought wisdom and fulfillment, then elderly people wou6 a be hII, gh s,

But the lessons of experience are hidden. I can help you learn from experience to see the world clearly, and clarity is something you desperately need right now. Your intuition knows this is tree, but your mind rebels; you've experienced much, but you've learned little."

"I don't know about that, Socrates. I mean, I wouldn't go that

f

ar. "

"No, Dan, you don't know about it yet, but you will. And you will go that far and beyond; I can assure you."

We headed back for the office just as a shiny red Toyota pulled in. Socrates continued talking as he opened the gas tank. "'Like most people, you've been taught to gather information from outside yourself; from books, magazines, experts." He stuck the gas nozzle into the tank. "Like this car, you open up and let the facts pour in. Sometimes the information is premium and sometimes it's low octane. You buy your knowledge at the current market rates, much like you buy gasoline."

"Hey, thanks for reminding me. My tuition check for next quarter is due in two days!"

Socrates just nodded and continued to fill the customer's tank. When the tank was full, Socrates kept pumping gas, until fuel started overflowing the tank and pouring down onto the ground. A flood of gasoline ran across the pavement.

"Socrates! The tank is full--watch what you're doing?' Ignoring me, he let the flood continue--saying, "Dan, like this gas tank, you are overflowing with preconceptions; full of useless knowledge. You hold many facts and opinions, yet know little of yourself. Before you can learn, you'll have to first empty your tank." He grinned at me, winked, and turning the pump off with a click, added, "Clean up the mess, will you?"

I got the feeling he was referring to more than the spilled gas. I hurriedly watered down the pavement. Soc took the driver's money and gave him back some change and a smile. We walked back to the office and settled in.

"What are you going to do, fill me full of your facts?" I bristled.

"No, I'm not going to burden you with more facts; I'm going to show you 'body wisdom'. Everything you'll ever need to know is

within you; the secrets of the universe are imprinted on the cells of your body. But you haven't learned inner vision; you don't know how to read the body. Your only recourse has been to read books and listen to experts and hope they are right. When you learn body wisdom, you'll be a Teacher among teachers."

I made an effort not to smirk. This gas station attendant was accusing my professors of ignorance and implying that my college education was pointless! "Oh, sure Socrates, I understand what you mean by this 'body wisdom' idea, but I don't.buy it."

He shook his head slowly. "You understand many things but have realized practically nothing."

"What is that supposed to mean?"

"Understanding is one dimensional. It is the comprehension of the intellect. It leads to knowledge, which you have. Realization, on the other hand, is three dimensional. It is the simultaneous comprehension of the 'whole-body'---the head, heart, and physical

instincts. It comes only from clear experience."

"I'm still not with you."

"'Do you remember when you first learned to drive? Prior to that time, you'd been a passenger; you only understood what it was. But you realized what it was like when you did it for the first time."

"That's rightt" I said. "I remember feeling, "So that's what it's like!"

"Exactly! That phrase describes the experience .of realization perfectly. One day, you'll say the same thing about life."

I sat quietly for a moment, then piped up. "You still haven't explained 'body wisdom.' "

"Come with me," Socrates beckoned, leading me toward the door marked "Private." Once inside, we were in total darkness. I started to tense, but then the fear gave way to keen anticipation. I was about to learn my first real secret: body wisdom.

The lights flashed on. We were in a bathroom and Socrates was peeing loudly into the toilet bowl. "This," he said proudly, "is body wisdom." His laughter echoed off the tile walls as I walked out and sat down on the couch and glared at the rug.

When he came out, I said, "Socrates, I still want to know..."

"If you are going to call me 'Socrates'," he.interrupted, "you might at least do the name honor by allowing me to ask the ques

tions, on occasion, and you can answer them. How does that sound?"'

"'Fine!" I responded. "You just asked your question, and I swered it. Now it's my turn. About that flying stunt you pulled the other night .... "

"You are a persistent young man, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am. I didn't get where I am today without persistence. And that's another question you got a straight answer for. Now, can we deal with some of mine?"

Ignoring me, he asked, "Where are you today, right now?"' Eagerly, I started talking about myself. However, I noticed that I was being sidetracked from getting answers to my questions. Still, I told him about my distant and recent past and about my inexplicable depressions. He listened patiently and intently, as if he had all the time in the world, until I finished several hours later,

"Very well," he said. "But you have still not answered my question about where you are."

"Yes I did, remember? I told you how I got to where I am today: by hard work."

"Where are you?"

"What do you mean, where am I?"
"Where are you?" he repeated softly.
"'I'm here."
"'Where is here?"

"'In this office, in this gas station!" I was getting impatient with this game.

"Where is this gas station?"'
"'In Berkeley."
"Where is Berkeley?"'
"'In Calif.omia."
"Where is California?"'
"'In the United States."
"Where is the United States?"

"'On a land mass, one of the continents in the Western. Hemisphe. Socrates, I . . ."

"'Where are the continents?"

I sighed. "On the earth. Are we done yet?"

"Where is the earth?"

"In the solar system, third planet from the sun. The sun is a

small star in the Milky Way galaxy, all right?"

"Where is the Milky Way?"

"Oh, brother," I sighed impatiently, roiling my eyes, "In the

Universe." I sat back and crossed my arms with finality.

"And where," Socrates smiled, "is the Universe?"

"The Universe is, well, there are theories about how it's shaped . . ."

"That's not what I asked. Where is it?"
"I don't know--how can I answer that?"

"That is the point. You cannot answer it, and you never will. There is no knowing about it. You are ignorant of where the Universe is, and thus, where you are. In fact, you have no knowledge of where anything is; nor do you know what an'thing is or how it came to be. It's a mystery.

"My ignorance, Dan, is based on this understanding. Your understanding is based on ignorance. I am a humorous fool; you are a serious jackass."

"Listen," I said, "there are things you should know about me. For one thing, I'm already a warrior of sorts. I'm a damn good gymnast." To punctuate what I'd said and to show him I could be spontaneous, I stood up from the couch and did a standing backward somersault, landing gracefully on the carpet.

"Hey," he said, "that's great. Do it again!"

"Well, it isn't really that terrific, Soc. It's pretty easy for me, in fact." I did my best to keep the condescension out of my voice but was unable to hold back a proud smile. I was used to showing this sort of thing to kids at the beach or the park. They always wanted to see it again, too.

"All right now, Soc, watch closely." I leaped upward and was just turning over when someone or something tossed me through the air. I landed in a heap on the couch. The Mexican blanket from the back of the couch wrapped itself around me, covering me. I poked my head out from the covers quickly, looking for Socrates. He was still sitting across the room, twelve feet away, curled in his chair and smiling mischievously.

"How did you do that?" My confusion was as total as his look of innocence.

"Did you like the ride?" he asked. "Do you want to see it

again?" adding, "Don't feel badly about your little slip, Dan; even a great warrior like you can make a boo-boo now and then."

I stood numbly and straightened the couch, tucking the blanket back in. I had to do something with my hands; I needed time to think. How had he done it? Another question that would go unanswered.

Socrates
padded softly out of the office to fill the tank of a pickup truck full of household belongings. "Off to cheer up another traveller on his journey," I thought. Then I closed my eyes and pondered Soc's apparent defiance of natural laws, or at least, common sense.

"Would you like to learn some secrets?" I hadn't even heard him come in. He was seated in his chair, his legs crossed.

I crossed my legs, too, and leaned forward eagerly. Misjudging the softness of the couch, I leaned a little bit too far and tipped over. Before I could untangle my legs, I found myself sprawled face down on the rug.

Socrates was beside himself with laughter. I sat up quickly, ramrod straight. One look at my stolid expression almost made See completely helpless with mirth. More accustomed to applause than to ridicule, I leaped to my feet in shame and anger. Soc cut himself short; his face and voice were charged with authority.

"Sit down!" he commanded, pointing to the couch. I sat. "I

asked you if you wanted to hear a secret.'"

"I do---about rooftops.'"

"You get to choose whether or not you want to hear a secret. I choose what it is about."

"Why do we always have to play by your rules?"

"Because it's my station, that's why." Soc spoke with exaggero ated petulance, possibly mocking me further. "Now pay close attention. By the way, are you comfortable and, uh, stable2" he winked. I just clenched my teeth.

"Dan, I have places to show you and tales to tell. I have secrets to unfold. But before we begin this journey together, you must appreciate that a secret's value is not in what you know, but what you

Soc took an old dictionary from his drawer and held it in the air. "Use whatever knowledge you have but see its limitations. Knowl

edge alone does not suffice; it has no heart. No amount of knowledge will nourish or sustain your spirit; it can never bring you ultimate happiness or peace. Life requires more than knowledge; it requires intense feeling and constant energy. Life demands right

action if knowledge is to come alive."

"I know that, Soc."

"That's your problem---you know but you don't act. You're not a warrior."

"Socrates, I just can't believe that. I know at times I've acted like a warrior, when the pressure was really on--you should see me in the gym!"

"Granted that you may, in fact, experience the mind of a warrior on occasion; resolute, flexible, clear, and free of doubt. You can develop the body of a warrior, lithe, supple, sensitive, and filled with energy. In rare moments, you may even feel the heart of a warrior, loving everything and everyone who appears before you. But these qualities are fragmented in you. You lack integration. My task is to put you back together again, Humpty."

"Wait a damn minute, Socrates. Though I don't doubt you have some unusual talents and like to surround yourself with an air of mystery, I don't see how you can presume to put me back together. Let's look at the situation: I'm a college student; you service cars. I'm a world champion; you tinker in the garage, make tea, and wait for some poor fool to walk in so you can frighten the wits out of him. Maybe I can help putyou back together.'" I didn't quite know what I was saying, but it felt good.

Socrates just laughed, shaking his head as if he couldn't quite believe what I'd said. Then he came over to me and knelt down at my side, saying, "You, put me back together? Maybe you will have that chance someday. But .for now, you should understand the difference between us." He poked me in the ribs, then poked me again and again, saying, "The warrior acts . . ."

"Damn it, stop that!" I yelled. "You're getting on my nerves!"
"... and the fool only reacts.'"
"Well what do you expect?'"

"I poke you and you get irritable; I insult you and you react with pride and anger; I slip on a banana peel and..." He took two steps away from me and slipped, landing with a thud on the carpet. I couldn't hold it in. I bellowed.

fantasy world. It's crazy!'"

"Yes," he smiled sadly, "'It is crazy." Socrates sat back in his chair and looked down at the floor. My mind rebelled at his helpless-old-man ploy, but my heart was drawn to this robust old eccentric who claimed to be some kind of "warrior." I took my jacket off, removed my shoes, and sat back down. Then a story that my grandfather had told me came to mind:

There was once a beloved king whose castle was on a high hill, overlooking his shire. He was so popular that the nearby townspeople sent him gifts daily, and his birthday celebration was enjoyed throughout the kingdom. The people loved him for his renowned wisdom and fair judgments.

One day, tragedy struck the town. The water supply was polluted, and every man, wom.an, and child went insane. Only the king, who had a private spring, was spared.

Soon after the tragedy, the mad townspeople began speaking of how the king was acting "strangely" and how his judgments were poor and his wisdom a sham. Many even went so far as to say that the king had gone crazy. His popularity soon vanished. No longer did the people bring him gifts or celebrate his birthday.

The lonely king, high on the hill, had no company at all. One day he decided to leave the hill and pay a visit to the town. It was a warm day, and so he drank from the village fountain.

That night there was a great celebration. The people all rejoiced, for their beloved king had "regained his sanity."

I realized then that the crazy world that Socrates had referred to was not his world at all, but mine.

I stood, ready to leave. "Socrates, you've told me to listen to my own body intuition and not depend upon what I read or what people tell me. Why, then, should I sit quietly and listen to what you tel me?"

"A very good question," he answered. "There is an e.quall] good answer. First of all, I speak to you from my own experience; i am not relating abstract theories I read in a book or heard second hand from an expert. I am one who truly knows his own body an mind, and therefore, knows others' as well. Besides," he smiled,

-"how do you know that I'm not your body intuition, speaking to you now?" He turned to his desk and picked up some paperwork. I had been dismissed for the evening. My whirling thoughts carried me into the night.

I was upset for days afterwards. I felt weak and inadequate around this man, and I was angry about the way he treated me. He constantly seemed to underestimate me; I wasn't a child! "Why should I choose to play a jackass sitting in a gas station," I thought, "when here, in my domain, I'm admired and respected?"

I trained harder than ever in gymnastics--my body burned with fever as I flew and fought my way through routine after routine. Yet it was somehow less satisfying than before. Every time I learned a new move or received a compliment, I remembered being tossed through the air onto the couch by that old man.

Hal, my coach, became concerned about rne and wanted to know ff anything was wrong. I reassured him that everything was fine. But it wasn't. I didn't feel like joking around with the guys on the team anymore. I was just confused.

That night I had my Grim Reaper dream again, with a difference. A chortling Socrates, decked out in the Grim Reaper's gloomy getup, pointed a gun at me that went off, shooting out a flag that said, "Bang!" I woke up giggling instead of groaning, for a change.

The next day I found a note in my mailbox. All it said was, "Rooftop secrets." When Socrates arrived that night, I was already sitting on the station steps, waiting for him. I'd come early to question the day attendants about Socrates--to find out his real name, maybe even where he lived--but they didn't know anything about him. "Who cares anyway?" one yawned. "He's just some old geezer who likes the night shift."

Soc removed his windbreaker, "Well?" I pounced. "Are you finally going to tell me how you got up on the roof?"

"Yes, I am; I think you're ready to hear it," he said seriously.

"In ancient Japan, there existed an elite group of warrior assassins."

He said the last word with a hissing sound, making me acutely aware of the dark silence lurking outside. My neck started to get that prickly feeling again.

"These warriors," he continued, "were named ninja. The

legends and reputation surrounding them were fearful. It was said that they could change themselves into animals; it was even said that they could fly--for short distances only, of course."

"Of course," I agreed, feeling the door to the dream world blow open with a chill gust. I wondered what he was leading up to, when he beckoned me into the garage where he was working on a Japanese sports car.

"Got to change the plugs," Socrates said, ducking his head under the sleek hood.

"'Yes, but what about the rooftop?" I urged.

I'll get to it in a moment, as soon as I change these plugs. Be patient. What I'm about to tell you is worth waiting for, believe me."

I sat toying with a mallet lying on the work table.

From Socrates' corner I heard, "You know, this is very amusing work, if you really pay attention to it." For him it was, perhaps.

Suddenly he put down the plugs, ran over to the light switch, and flicked it. In a darkness so total that I couldn't even see my hands in front of me, I began to get nervous. I never knew what Socrates

would do, and after that talk about ninja ....

"'Soc? Soc?"

"Where are you?" he yelled from directly behind me.

I spun around fell onto the hood of a Chevy. "Inl don't know!" I stammered.

"Absolutely right," he said, turning on the lights. "I guess you are getting smarter," he said, with a Cheshire cat grin.

I shook my head at his lunacy and perched myself on the Chevy's fender, glancing under the open hood to find its innards ,nissing. "Socrates, will you quit clowning and get on with it?"

As he deftly screwed in the new plugs, unsnapped the distributor cap, and examined the rotors, he continued.

"These ninja were not practitioners of magic. Their secret was

the most intense physical and mental training known to man."
"Socrates, where is this all leading?"

"To see where something leads, it's best to wait until you reach the end," he replied and continued with the story.

"The ninja could swim wearing heavy armor; they could climb sheer walls like lizards, using only fingers and toes in tiny cracks. They designed imaginative scaling ropes, dark and nearly invisible,

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and used clever means of hiding; tricks of distraction, illusion, and escape. The ninja,'" he finally added, "were great jumpers.'"

"Now we're getting somewhere!" I almost rubbed my hands in anticipation.

"The young warrior, when still a child, would be trained in jumping in the following manner: He was given a corn seed and told to plant it. Just as the stalk was beginning to grow, the young warrior would jump over the small stalk many, many times. Each day the stalk would grow; each day the child would jump. Soon the stalk was higher than the child's head, but that wouldn't stop him. Finally, if he failed to clear the stalk, he would be given a new seed and would begin over. Eventually, there was no stalk that the young ninja could not leap over."

"Well, then what? What is the secret?" I asked, waiting for the final revelation.

Socrates paused and took a deep breath. "So you see, the young ninja practiced with comstalks. I practice with gas stations."

Silence filled the room. Then, suddenly, Soc's musical laughter pealed through the station; he was laughing so hard he had to lean against the Datsun he'd been working on.

"So that's it, huh? That's what you were going to tell me about rooftops?"

"Dan, that is all you can know until you can do," he answered.

"You mean you're going to teach me how to jump up on the roof?" I asked, my demeanor suddenly brightening.

"Perhaps so, perhaps not. Each of us has our own unique talents. You may learn to jump up on rooftops," he grinned. "For now, toss me that screwdriver, will you?"

I threw it to him. I swear he grabbed it out of the air while looking in the other direction! He finished with it quickly and tossed it back to me, yelling, "Heads up!" I dropped it and it fell to the floor with a loud clatter. This was exasperating; I didn't know how much more ridicule I could take.

The weeks passed quickly, and my sleepless nights became commonplace. Somehow, I adjusted. And there was another change: I found that my visits with Socrates were becoming even more interesting to me than gymnastics practice.

Each night while we serviced cars--he put the gas in, I did windows, and both of us joked with customers--he would encourage

me to talk about my life. He was strangely silent about his own, meeting my questions with a terse, "Later," or answering in complete non sequimrs.

When I asked him why he was so interested in the details of my life, he said, "I need to understand your personal illusions to grasp the scope of your illness. We are going to have to clean your mind before the door to the warrior's way can open.'"

"'Don't you touch my mind. I like it just the way it is."

"If you really liked it the way it is, you wouldn't be here now. You've changed your mind many times in the past. Soon, you're going to do it in a more profound way." After that, I decided I was going to have to be very careful with this man. I didn't know him all that well, and I still wasn't sure how crazy he was.

As it was, Soc's style was constantly changing, unorthodox, humorous, and even bizarre. Once he ran screaming after a little white dog that had just peed on the station steps---right in the middle of a lecture he was giving me on the "supreme benefits of an unshakably serene composure."

Another time, about a week later, after we'd stayed up all night, we walked to Strawberry Creek and stood on a bridge, looking down at the stream overflowing with the winter rains.

"I wonder how deep the stream is today?" I casually remarked, gazing absent-mindedly down into the rushing waters. The next

thing I knew, I'd splashed into the churning, muddy brown water. He had tossed me off the bridge!
"Well, how deep is it?"

"Deep enough," I sputtered, dragging myself and my waterlogged clothes to shore. So much for idle speculation. I made a mental note to keep my mouth shut.

As the days passed I started to notice more and more differences between us. In the office, I'd devour candy bars when I got hungry; Soc munched on a fresh apple or pear or made himself herb tea. I fidgeted around on the couch while he sat serenely still on his chair, like a Buddha. My movements were awkward and noisy compared to the way he softly glided across the floor. And he was an old man, mind you.

There were many small lessons that awaited me each night, even in the early days. One night I made the mistake of complaining about how people at school just didn't seem to act very friendly

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Softly, he said, ,"It is better for you to take responsibility for your life as it is, instead of blaming others, or circumstances, for your predicament. As your eyes open, you'll see that your state of health, happiness, and every circumstance of your life has been, in

large part, arranged by you--consciously or unconsciously."

"I don't know what you mean, but I don't think I agree with it."
"Well, here's a story about a guy like you, Dan:

On a construction site in the Midwest, when the lunch whistle blew, all the workers would sit down together to eat. And with singular regularity Sam would open his lunch pail and start to complain.

"Son of a gun!" he'd cry, "not peanut butter and jelly sandwiches again. I hate peanut butter and jelly!"

Sam moaned about his peanut butter and jelly sandwiches day after day after day. Weeks passed, and the other workers were getting irritated by tiis behavior. Finally, another man on the work crew said, "Fer crissakes, Sam, if you hate peanut butter and jelly so much, why don't you just tell yer o1' lady to make you something different?"

"What do you mean, my o1' lady?" Sam replied. "I'm not ma -tied. I make my own sandwiches."

Socrates paused, then added, "So you see, we all make our own sandwiches in this life." He handed me a brown bag with two sandwiches in it. "Do you want cheese and tomato or tomato and cheese?" he asked, grinning.

"Oh, just give me either," I jested back.

As we munched, Socrates said, "When you become fully responsible for your life, you can become fully human; once you become human, you may discover what it means to be a warrior."
"Thanks, Soe, for the food for thought, and for belly." I bowed grandly. Then I put on my jacket and got ready to leave. 'I won't be by for a couple of weeks. Finals are coming up. And I also have some hard thinking to do." Before he could comment I waved goodbye and left for home.

I lost myself in the semester's last classes. My hours in the gym were spent in the hardest training rd ever done. Whenever I stopped pushing myself, my thoughts and feelings began to stir

uneasily. I felt the first signs of what was to become a growing sense of alienation from my everyday world. For the first time in my life, I had a choice between two distinct realities. One was crazy and one was sane--but I just didn't know which was which, so I committed myself to neither.

I couldn't shake a growing sense that maybe, just maybe, Socrates was not so eccentric after all. Perhaps his descriptions of my life had been more accurate than I'd imagined. I began to really s how I acted with people, and what I saw began to disturb me. I was sociable enough on the outside, but I was really only concerned about myself.

Bill, one of my best friends, fell from the horse and broke his wrist; Rick learned a full twisting back somersault that he'd ben working on for a year. I felt the same emotional response in both cases; nothing.

Under the weight of my growing self-knowledge, my self-esteem was sinking fast.

One night, just before finals, I heard a knock at my door. I was surprised and happy to find toothpaste Susie, the blond cheerleader

I hadn't seen in weeks. I realized how lonely I'd been.

"Aren't you going to invite me in, Danny?"

"'Oh! Yes. I'm really glad to see you. Uh, sit down, let me take your coat, would you like something to eat? Something to drink?" She just gazed at me.

"What is it, Susie?"

"'You look tired, Danny, but..." she reached out and touched my face. "There's something.. , your eyes look different, somehow. What is it?"

I touched her cheek. "Stay with me tonight, Susie."

"I thought you'd never ask. I brought my toothbrush!"

The next morning I turned over to smell Sue's tousled hair, sweet like summer straw, and to feel her soft breath on my pillow. "I should feel good," I thought, but my mood was grey like the fog outside.

For the next few days, Sue and I spent a lot of time together. I don't think I was very good company, but Sue's spirits were, enough for both of us.

Something kept me from telling her about Socrates. He was of another world, a world in which she had no part. How could she understand when I couldn't even fathom what was happening to me?

Finals came and went. I did well, but I didn't care. Susie went home for spring vacation, and I was glad to be alone.

Spring vacation was soon over, and warm winds blew through the littered streets of Berkeley. I knew that it was time to return to that warfior's world, to that strange little gas station--this time perhaps more open and more humble than before. But now I was more sure of one thing. If Socrates cut at me with his sharp wit again, I was going to slash right back!

BOOK ONE

THE WINDS OF CHANGE

Gusts of Magic

| t was late evening. After my workout and dinner, I took a nap. When I awoke it was nearly midnight. 1 walked slowly through the crisp night air of early spring toward the station. A strong breeze blew from behind me, as if impelling me forward along the campus paths.

As I neared the familiar intersection, I slowed down. A light drizzle had begun, chilling the night. In the glow from the warmly lit office I could see Soc's shape through the misted window, drinking from his mug, and a mixture of anticipation and dread squeezed my lungs and accelerated my heart beat.

I looked down at the pavement as I crossed the street and neared the office door. The wind gusted against the back of my neck. Suddenly chilled, I snapped my head up to see Socrates standing in the doorway, staring at me and sniffing the air like a wolf. He seemed to be looking right through me. Memories of the Grim Reaper returned. I knew this man had within him great warmth and compassion, but I sensed that behind his dark eyes lay a great unknowrl danger.

My fear dissipated when he gently said, "It's good that you've returned." He welcomed me into the office with a wave of his arm. .lust as I took off my shoes and sat down, the station bell clanged. I wiped the mist off the window and looked out to see an old Plymouth limp in with a fiat tire. Socrates was already headed out the door wearing his army surplus rain poncho. Watching him, I won. dered momentarily how he could possibly have frightened me.

Then rain clouds darkened the night, bringing back fleeting images of the black-hooded death of my dream, changing the pattering of the soft rain into bony fingers drumming madly on the

roof. I moved restlessly on the couch, tired from my intense workouts in the gym. The Conference Championships were coming up next week, and today had been the last hard workout before the meet.

Socrates opened the door to the office. He stood with the door open and said, "Come outside--now," then left me. As I rose and put on my shoes, I looked through the mist. Socrates was standing out beyond the pumps, just outside the aura of the station lights. Half-shrouded in darkness, he appeared to be wearing a black hood.

I was not going out there. The office was like a fortress against the night--and against a world outside that was beginning to grate on my nerves like noisy downtown traffic. Nope. I wasn't going out. Socrates beckoned me again, then again, from out in the darkness. Surrendering to fate, I went outside.

As I approached him cautiously, he said, "Listen, can you feel it?"

"What?"

"Feel!"

.lust then the rain stopped and the wind seemed to change directions. Strange--a warm wind. "The wind, Sot?"

"Yes, the winds. They're changing. It means a turning point for you--now. You may not have realized it; neither did I, in fact--but tonight is a critical moment in time for you. You left, but you returned. And now the winds are changing." He looked at me for a moment, then strode back inside.

I followed him in and sat down on the familiar couch. Socrates was very still in his soft brown chair, his eyes riveted upon me. In a voice strong enough to pierce walls but light enough to be carded by the March winds, he announced, "There is something I must do now. Don't be afraid."

He stood. "Socrates, you're scaring the hell out of me!" I stammered angrily, sliding back in the couch as he slowly came toward me, stalking, like a tiger on the prowl.

He glanced out the window for a moment checking for possible interruptions, then knelt in front of me, saying softly, "Dan, do you recall that I told you-we must work on changing your mind before you can see the warrior's way?"

"Yes, but I really don't think.,, ."

"'Don't be afraid," he repeated. "Comfort yourself with a saying of Confucius," he smiled. " 'Only the supremely wise and the ignorant do not alter.' "Saying that, he reached out and placed his hands gently but firmly on my temples.

Nothing happened for a momentnthen suddenly, I felt a growing pressure in the middle of my head. There was a loud buzzing, then a sound like waves rushing up on the beach. I heard bells tinging, and my head felt as if it was going to burst. That's when I saw the light, and my mind exploded with its brightness. Something in me was dying--I knew this for a certaintymand something else was being born! Then the light engulfed everything.

I found myself lying back on the couch. Socrates was offering

me a cup of tea, shaking me gently.

"What happened to me?"

"Let's just say I manipulated your energies and opened a few new circuits. The fireworks were just your brain's delight in the energy bath. The result is that you are relieved of your lifelong illusion of knowledge. From now on, ordinary knowledge is no

longer going to satisfy you, I'm afraid."

"I don't get it."

"You will," he said, without smiling.

I was very tired. We sipped our tea in silence. Then, excusing myself, I rose, put on my sweater, and walked home as if in a dream.

The next day was full of classes and full of professors babbling words that had no meaning or relevance for me. In History 101, Watson lectured on how Churchill's political instincts had affected the war. I stopped taking notes. I was too busy taking in the colors and textures of the room, feeling the energies of the people around me. The sounds of my professors' voices were far more interesting than the concepts they conveyed. Socrates, what did you do to me? I'll never make it through finals.
I was walking out of class, fascinated by the knobby texture of the carpet, when I heard a familiar voice.

"Hi, Danny! I haven't seen you for days. I've called every night, but you're never home. Where have you been hiding?"

"Oh, hi Susie. It's good to see you again. I've been.., study

ing." Her words had danced through the air. i could hardly understand them but I could feel what she was feeling--hurt and a little jealous. Yet her face was beaming as usual.

"I'd like to talk more, Susie, but I'm on my way to the gym."

"Oh, I forgot." I felt her disappointment. "Well," she said,

I'll see you soon, huh?"

"Sure."

"Hey," she said. "Wasn't Watson's lecture great? I just love

hearing about Churchill's life. Isn't it interesting?"
"Uh, yeahmgreat lecture."
"Well, bye for now, Danny."

"Bye." Turning away, I recalled what Soe had said about my "patterns of shyness and fear." Maybe he was right. I wasn't really that comfortable with people; I was never sure of what to say.

In the gym that afternoon, however, I certainly knew what todo. I came alive, turning on the faucet of my energy full blast. I played, swung, leaped; I was a clown, a magician, a chimpanzee. It was one of my best days ever. My mind was so clear that I felt exactly how to do anything I tried. My body was relaxed, supple, quick, and light. In tumbling, I invented a one and one-half backward somersault with a late half twist to a roll; from the high bar, I swung into a full twisting double flyaway--both moves, the first ever done in the United States.

A few days later, the team flew up to Oregon for the Conference Championships. We won the meet and flew home. It was like a dream of fanfare, action, and glorymbut I couldn't escape the concerns that plagued me.

I considered the events that had occurred since the other night's experience of the bursting light. Something had certainly happened, as Soc had predicted, but it was frightening and I didn't think I liked it at all. Perhaps Socrates was not what he seemed; perhaps he was something more clever, or more evil than I'd suspected.

These thoughts vanished as I stepped through the doorway of the lighted office and saw his eager smile. As soon as I'd sat down,

Socrates said, "Are you ready to go on a journey?"

"A journey?" I echoed.

"Yesma trip, travel, sojourn, vacationman adventure."

"'No, thanks, I'm not dressed for it."

"'Nonsense!" he bellowed, so loudly that we both looked around to see if any passersby had heard. "Shhh!" he whispered loudly. "'Not so loud, you'll wake everyone."

Taking advantage of his affability, I blurted out, "Socrates, my life no longer makes sense. Nothing works, except when I'm in the gym. Aren't you supposed to make things better for me? I thought that's what a teacher did."

He started to speak, but I interrupted.

"And another thing. I've always believed that we have to find our own paths in life. No one can tell another how to live."

Socrates slapped his forehead with his palm, then looked upward in resignation. "I am part of your path, baboon. And I didn't exactly rob you from the cradle and lock you up here, you know. You can take off whenever you like." He walked to the door and held it open.

.lust then, a black limousine pulled into the station, and Soe affected a British accent: "Your car is ready, sir." Disoriented, I actually thought we were going on a trip in the limousine. I mean, why not? So, befuddled, I walked straight out to the limo and started to climb into the back seat. I found myself staring into the wrinkled old face of a little man, sitting with his arm around a girl of about sixteen, probably off the streets of Berkeley. He stared at me like a hostile lizard.

Soc's hand grabbed me by the back of my sweater and dragged me out of the car. Closing the door, he apologized: "Excuse my young friend. He's never been in a beautiful car like this and just got carried away--didn't you, Jack?"

I nodded dumbly. "What's going on?" I whispered fiercely out of the side of my mouth. But he was already washing the windows. When the car pul.led away, I flushed with embarrassment. "Why didn't you stop me, Socrates?"

"Frankly, it was pretty funny. I hadn't realized you could be so gullible."

We stood there, in the middle of the night, staring each other down. Socrates grinned as I clenched my teeth, I was getting angry. "I'm really tired of playing the fool around you!" I yelled.

"Well, you have to admit that you've been practicing the role so diligently, you've got it nearly perfect." I wheeled around, kicked

the trash can, and stomped back toward the office. Then it occurred

to me. "Why did you call me Jack, awhile ago?"

"Short for jackass," he said, passing me.

"'All right, god damn it," I said as I ran by him to enter the of rice. "Let's go on your journey. Whatever you want to give, I can take!"

"Well, now. This is a new side of youmspunky Danny."

"Spunky or not, I'm no flunky. Now tell me, where are we headed? Where am I headed? I should be in control, not you!"

Socrates took a deep breath. "Dan, I can't tell you anything. Much of a warrior's path is subtle, invisible to the uninitiated. For now, I have been showing you what a warrior is not by showing you your own mind. You can come to understand that soon enough--and so I must take you on a journey. Come with me."

He led me to a cubbyhole I hadn't noticed before, hidden behind the racks of tools in the garage and furnished with a small rug and a heavy straight-backed chair. The predominant color of the nook

was grey. My stomach felt queasy.

"Sit down," he said gently.

"Not until you explain what this is all about." I crossed my arms over my chest.

Now it was his turn to explode. "I am a warrior; you are a baboon. I will not explain a damn thing. Now shut up and sit down or go back to your gymnastics spotlight and forget you ever knew me!"

"You're not kidding, are you?"

"'No, I am not kidding." I hesitated a second, then sat.

Socrates reached into a drawer, took out some long pieces of cotton cloth, and began to tie me to the chair.

"What are you going to do, torture me?" I half-joked.

"No, now please be silent," he said, tying the last strip around

my waist and behind the chair, like an airline seat-belt.

"Are we going flying, Soc?" I asked nervously.

"In a manner of speaking, yes," he said, kneeling in front of me, taking my head in his hands and placing his thumbs against the upper ridges of my eye sockets. My teeth chattered; I had an excru tiating urge to urinate. But in another second, I had forgotten all. Colored lights flashed. I thought I heard his voice but couldn't quite

make it out; it was too far away.

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We were walking down a corridor swathed in a blue fog. My feet moved but I couldn't feel ground. Gigantic trees surrounded us; they became buildings; the buildings became boulders, and we ascended a steep canyon that became the edge of a sheer cliff.

The fog had cleared; the air was freezing. Green clouds stretched below us for miles, meeting an orange sky on the horizon.

I was shaking. I tried to say something to Socrates, but my voice came out muffled. My shaking grew uncontrollable. Soc put his hand on my belly. It was very warm and had a wondrously calming effect. I relaxed and he took my arm firmly, tightening his grip, and hurtled forward, off the edge of the world, pulling me with him.

Without warning the clouds disappeared and we were hanging from the rafters of an indoor stadium, swinging precariously like two drunken spiders high above the floor.

"Ooops," said See. "Slight miscalculation.'"

"What the hell!" I yelled, struggling for a better handhold. I swung myself up and over and lay panting on a beam, twining my arms and legs around it. Socrates had already perched himself lightly on the beam in front of me. I noticed that he handled himself well for an old man.

"Hey, look," I pointed. "'It's a gymnastics meett Socrates, you're nuts."

"I'm nuts?" he laughed quietly. "Look who's sitting on the beam next to me."

"How are we going to get down?"
"Same way we got up, of course."
"How did we get up here?"

He scratched his head. "I'm not precisely sure; I had hoped for a front-row seat. I guess they were sold out.'"

I began to laugh shrilly. This whole thing was too ridiculous. See clapped a hand over my mouth. "Shhhh!" He removed his hand. That was a mistake.

"HaHaHaHaHa!" I laughed loudly before he muffled me again. I calmed down but felt giddy and started giggling.

He whispered at me harshly. "'This.journey is real--more real than the waking dreams of your usual life. Pay attention!"

By this time the scene below had indeed caught my attention. The audience, from this height, coalesced into a multicolored array

of dots, a shimmering, rippling, pointillist painting. I caught sight of a raised platform in the middle of the arena with a familiar bright blue square of floor-exercise mat, surrounded by various gymnastic apparatus. My stomach rumbled in response; I experienced my usual precompetition nervousness.

Socrates reached into a small knapsack (where had that come from?) and handed me a pair of binoculars, just as a female performer walked out onto the floor.

I focused my binoculars on the lone gymnast and saw she was from the Soviet Union. So, we were attending an international exhibition somewhere. As she walked over to the uneven bars, I realized that I could hear her talking to herself! "The acoustics in here," I thought, "must be fantastic." But then I saw that her lips weren't moving.

I moved the lenses quickly to the audience and heard the roar of many voices; yet they were just sitting quietly. Then it came to me. Somehow, I was reading their minds!

I turned the glasses back to the woman gymnast. In spite of the language barrier, I could understand her thoughts: "Be strong...

ready " I saw a preview of her routine as she ran through it

mentally.

Then I focused on a man in the audience, a guy in a white sports shirt in the midst of a sexual fantasy about one of the East German contestants. Another man, apparently a coach, was engrossed with the woman about to p.erform. A woman in the audience watched her too, thinking, "Beautiful girl.., had a bad fall last year... hope she does a good job."

I noticed that I was not receiving words, but feeling-concepts--- sometimes quiet or muffled, sometimes loud and clear. That was how I could "understand" Russian, German, or whatever.

I noticed something else. When the Soviet gymnast was doing her routine, her mind was quiet. When she finished and returned to her chair, her mind started up again. It was the same for the East German gymnast on the rings and the American on the horizontal bar. Furthermore, the best performers had the quietest minds during their moment of truth.

One East German fellow was distracted by a noise while he swung through handstand after handstand on the parallel bars. I

sensed his mind drawn to the noise; he thought, "What?.., ," as he muffed his final somersault to bandstand.

A telepathic voyeur, I peeked into the minds of the audience. "I'm hungry .... Got to catch an eleven o'clock plane or the Dusseldorf plans are shot .... I'm hungry!" But as soon as a performer was in midflight, the minds of the audience calmed too.

For the first time, I realized why I loved gymnastics so. It gave me a blessed respite from my noisy mind. When I was swinging and somersaulting, nothing else mattered. When my body was active, my mind rested in the moments of silence.

The mental noise from the audience was getting annoying, like a stereo playing too loud. I lowered my glasses and let them hang. But I had neglected to fasten the strap around my neck, and I almost fell off the rafter trying to grab them as they plummeted straight for the floor exercise mat and a woman performer directly below!

"Soc!" I whispered in alarm. He sat placidly. I looked down to see the damage, but the binoculars had disappeared.

Socrates grinned. "Things work under a slightly different set of laws when you travel with me."

He disappeared and I was tumbling through space, not downward but upward. I had a vague sense of walking backwards from the edge of a cliff, down a canyon, then into a mist, like a character in a crazy movie in reverse.

Socrates was wiping my face with a wet cloth. Still strapped to the chair, I slumped.

"Well," he said. "'Isn't travel broadening?"

"You can say that again. Uh, how about unstrapping me?"
"'Not just yet," he replied, reaching again for my head.

I mouthed, "No, wait!" just before the lights went out and a howling wind arose, carrying me off into space and time.

I became the wind, yet with eyes and ears. And I saw and heard far and wide. I blew past the east coast of India near the Bay of Bengal, past a scmbwoman busy with her tasks. In Hong Kong, I whirled around a seller of fine fabric bargaining loudly with a shop

per. I raced through the streets of So Paulo, drying the sweat of German tourists playing volleyball in the hot tropical sun.

I left no country untouched. I thundered through China and Mongolia and across the vast, rich land of the Soviet Union. I gusted through valleys and alpine meadows of Austria, sliced cold through the fjords of Norway. I tossed up litter on the Rue Pigalle in Paris. One moment I was a twister, tipping across Texas; the next, I was a gentle breeze, caressing the hair of a young gift con tcmplating suicide in Canton, Ohio.

I experienced every emotion, heard every cry of anguish and every peal of laughter. Every human circumstance was opened to me. I felt it all, and I understood.

The world was peopled with minds, whirling faster than any wind, in search of distraction and escape from the predicament of change, the dilemma of life and death--seeking purpose, security, enjoyment; trying to make sense of the mystery. Everyone everywhere lived a confused, bitter search. Reality never matched their dreams; happiness was just around the comer--a corner they never turned.

And the source of it all was the human mind.

Socrates was removing the clothstrips which had bound me. Sunlight streaked through the windows of the garage into my eye,s-- eyes that had seen so much--filling them with tears.

Socrates helped me into the office. As I lay trembling on the couch, I realized that I was no longer the naive and self-important youth who had sat quaking in the grey chair a few minutes or hours or days ago. I felt very old. I had seen the suffering of the world, the condition of the human mind, and I almost wept with an inconsolable sadness. There was no escape.

Socrates, on the other hand, was jovial. "Well, no more time to play games tight now. My shift is almost up. Why don't you shuffle on home and get some sleep, kiddo?"

I creaked to my feet and put my arm in the wrong sleeve of my jacket. Extricating myself, I asked weakly, "Socrates, why'd you tie me down?"

"Never too weak for questions, I see. I tied you down so you wouldn't fall off the chair while you were thrashing around playing Peter Pan."

"'Did I really fly? It felt like it." I sat down again, heavily.
"Let's say for now that it was a flight of the imagination."
"Did you hypnotize me or what?"

"Not in the way you mean--certainly not to the same degree
you've been hypnotized by your own confused mental processes."
He laughed, picked up his knapsack (where had I seen it before?),
and prepared to leave. "What I did Was draw you into one of many

parallel realities---for your amusement and instruction."
"How?"

"It's a bit complicated. Why don't we leave it for another
time." Socrates yawned and stretched like a cat. As I stumbled out
the door I heard Soc's voice behind me. "Sleep well. You can expect
a little surprise when you awake."

"Please, no more surprises," I mumbled, heading for home in a
daze. I vaguely remember falling onto my bed. Then blackness.

I awoke to the sound of the wind-up clock ticking loudly on the
blue chest of drawers. But I owned no wind-up clock; I had no blue
chest of drawers. Neither did I possess this thick quilt, now in
disarray at my feet. Then I noticed that the feet weren't mine either. "Much too small," I thought. The sun poured through the unfamiliar
picture window.

Who and where was I? I held onto a quickly fading memory,
then it was gone.

My small feet kicked off the remaining covers, and I leaped out
of bed, just as Morn yelled, "Danneeeey--time to get up, sweetheart."
It was February 22, 1952--my sixth birthday. I let my
pa]amas fall to the floor and kicked them under the bed, then ran
downstairs in my Lone Ranger underwear. In a few hours my
friends would be arriving with presents, and we'd have cake and
ice cream and lots of funt

After all the party decorations were thrown out and everyone had
gone, I played listlessly with my new toys. I was bored, I was
tired, and my stomach hurt. I closed my eyes and floated off to
sleep.

I saw each day pass like the next: school for a week, then the
weekend, school, weekend, summer, fall, winter and spring.

The years passed, and before long, I was one of the top high
school gymnasts in Los Angeles. In the gym, life was exciting; out

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side the gym, it was a general disappointment. My few moments of fun consisted of bouncing on the trampoline or cuddling in the back seat of my Valiant with Phyllis, my first curvy girlfriend.

One day coach Harold Frey called me from Berkeley, California, and offered me a scholarship to the University! I couldn't wait to head up the coast to a new life. Phyllis, however, didn't share my enthusiasm. We began arguing about my going away, and we finally broke up. I felt bad but was consoled by my college plans, Soon, I was sure, life was really going to begin!

The college years raced by, filled with gymnastics victories, but very few other high points. In my senior year, just before the Olym:,:c gym#stics tr:Is, I man'icd Susie We stayed in Berke:c.v so I could train with the team; I was so busy I didn't have much time or energy for my new wife.

The final trials were held at UCLA. When the scors we tallied, I was ec:tetic--l d m:e the term: 'ut my per:orma#ces at

the Olympiad didn't live up to my expectations. I re/umed home and slipped into relative anonymity.

My newborn son arrived, and I began to feel a growing responsibility and pressure. I found a job selling life insurance, which took up most of my days and nights. I never seemed to have time for my family. Within a year Susie and I were separated; eventually she got a divorce. A fresh start, I reflected sadly.

One day I looked in the mirror and realized that forty years had passed; I was old. Where had my life gone? With the help of my psychiatrist I had overcome my drinking problem; and I'd had money, houses, and women. But I had no one now. I was lonely.

I lay in bed late at night and wondered where my son was--it had been years since I'd seen him. I wondered about Susie and about my friends from the good old days.

I now passed the days in my favorite rocking chair, sipping wine, watching TV, and thinking about old times. I watched children play in front of the house. It had been a good life, I supposed. I'd gotten everything I'd gone after, so why wasn't I happy?

One day, one of the children playing on the lawn came up to the

porch. A friendly little boy, smiling, he asked me how old I was. "I'm two hundred years old," I said.

He giggled, said, "No you're not," and put his hands on his.

n his

hips. I laughed, too, which touched off one of my coughing spells, and Mary, my pretty, capable young nurse, had to ask him to go.

After she had helped me regain my breath, I gasped, "Mary, will you let me be alone for a while?"

"Of course, Mr. Millman." I didn't watch her walk away--that was one of life's pleasures that had died long ago.

I sat alone. I had been alone my whole life, it seemed. I lay back on my rocker and breathed. My last pleasure. And soon that, too, would be gone. I cried soundlessly and bitterly. "God damn itt" I thought. "Why did my marriage have to fail? How could I have done things differently? How could I really have lived?"

it possible that I had missed something very important--something that would have made a real difference? "No, impossible," I assured myself. I cited all my achievements aloud. The fear persisted.

I stood up slowly, looked down at the town from the porch of my hilltop house, and wondered: Where had life gone? What was it for? Was everyone... "Oh, my heart, it's---ahh, my arm, the pain!" I tried to call out, but couldn't breathe.

My knuckles grew white as I clutched the railing, trembling. Then my body turned to ice, and my heart to stone. I fell back into the chair; my head dropped forward.

The pain left abruptly, and there were lights I'd never seen before and sounds I'd never heard. Visions floated by.

"Is that you, Susie?" said a distant voice in my mind. Finally, all sight and sound became a point of light, then vanished.

I had found the only peace I'd ever known.

I heard a warrior's laugh. I sat up with a shock, the years pouring back into me. I was in my own bed, in my apartment, in Berkeley, California. I was still in college, and my digital clock showed 6:25 P.M. I'd slept through classes and workout!

I leaped out of bed and looked in the mirror, touching my still youthful face, shivering with relief. It had all been a dream--a lifetime in a single dream, Soc's "little surprise."

I sat in my apartment and stared out the window, troubled. My dream had been exceptionally vivid. In fact, the past had been en

tirely accurate, even down to details I'd long forgotten. Socrates had told me that these journeys were real. Had this one predicted my future, too?

I hurried to the station at 9:50 P.M. and met Socrates as he arrived. As soon as he stepped inside and the day-shift attendant left, I asked, "All right, Soc. What happened?"

"You know better than I. It was your life, not mine, thank God."

"Socrates, I'm pleading with you"---I held out my hands to him. "Is that what my life is going to be like? Because if it is, I see no point in living it."

He spoke very slowly and softly, as he did when he had something he wanted me to pay particular attention to. "'Just as there are different interpretations of the past and many ways to change the present, there are any number of possible futures. What you dreamed was a highly probable future--the one you were heading for had you not met me."

"You mean that if I had decided to pass by the gas station that night, that dream would have been my future?"

"Very possibly. And it still may be. But you can make choices and change your present circumstances. You can alter your future."

Socrates made us some tea, and set my mug down softly next to me. His movements were graceful, deliberate.

"See," I said, "I don't know what to make of it. My life these past months has been like an improbable novel, you know what I mean? Sometimes I wish I could go back to a normal life. This secret life here with you, these dreams and journeys; it's been hard on me.'"

Socrates took a deep breath; something of great import was coming. "Dan, I'm going to increase my demands on you as you become ready. I guarantee that you'll want to leave the life you know and choose alternatives that seem more attractive, more pleasant, more 'normal.' Right now, however, that would be a greater mistake than you can imagine."

"But I do see the value in what you're showing me."

"'That may be so, but. you still have an astonishing capacity to fool yourself. That is why you needed to dream your life. Re

member it when you're tempted to run off and pursue your illusions."

"Don't
worry about me, Socrates. I can handle it."

If I had known what was ahead, I would have kept my mouth
shut.

The Web of Illusion

The March winds were calming. Colorful spring blossoms spread their fragrance through the air---even into the shower room, where I washed the sweat and soreness from my body after an energy-filled orkout,

I dressed quickly and skipped down the rear steps of Harmon Gym to watch the sky over Edwards Field turn orange with the sun's final glow. The cool air refreshed me. Relaxed and at peace with the world, I ambled downtown to get a cheeseburger on the way to the U.C. Theater. Tonight, they were showing The Great Escape, an exciting film about a daring escape of British and American prisoners of war.

When the film was over I jogged up University Avenue toward campus, heading left up Shattuck, and arrived at the station soon after Socrates came on duty. It was a busy night, so I helped him until just after midnight. We went into the office and washed our hands, after which he surised me by starting to fix a Chinese dinner--and beginning a new phase of his teaching.

It started when I told him about The Great Escape.

"Sounds like an exciting film," he said, unpacking the bag of

fresh vegetables he'd brought in, "and an appropriate one, too."
"Oh? How's that?"'

"You, too, Dan, need to escape. You're a prisoner of your own illusions--about yourself and about the world. To cut yourself free, you're going to need more courage and strength than any movie hero."

I felt so good that night I just couldn't take Soc seriously at all.
"'I don't feel like I'm in prison---except when you have me strapped to a chair.'"

He began washing vegetables. Over the sound of running water, he commented, "You don't see your prison because its bars are invisible. Part of my task is to point out your predicament, and I hope it is the most disillusioning experience of your life."

"Well thanks a lot, friend," I said, shocked at his ill-will.

"I don't believe you have understood me." He pointed a turnip at me, then sliced it into a bowl. "Disillusion is the greatest gift I can give you. However, because of your fondness for illusion, you consider the term negative. You commiserate with a friend by saying, 'Oh, what a disillusioning experience that must have been,' when you ought to be celebrating with him. The word disillusion is literally a 'freeing from illusion'. But you cling to your illusions."

"Facts," I challenged him.

"Facts," he said, tossing aside the tofu he'd been dicing. "Dan, you are suffering; you do not fundamentally enjoy your life. Your entertainments, your playful affairs, and even your gymnastics are temporary ways to distract you from your underlying sense of fear."

"Wait a minute, Soe." I was irritated. "Are you saying that gymnastics and sex and movies are bad?"

"Not inherently. But for you they're addictions, not enjoyments. You use them to distract you from what you know you should do: break free."

"Wait, Socrates. Those aren't facts."

"Yes, they are, and they are entirely verifiable, even though you don't see it yet. You Dan, in your conditioned quest for achievement and entertainment, avoid the fundamental source of your suffering."

"So that's what you think, huh?" I retorted sharply, unable to keep the antagonism out of my voice.

"q'at was not something you really wanted to hear, was it?"
"No, not particularly. It's an interesting theory, but I don't think it applies to me, that's all. How about giving me something a little more up beat?"

"'Sure," he said, picking up his vegetables and resuming his chopping. "The troth is, Dan, that life is going wonderfully for you and that you're not really suffering at all. You don't need me and you're already a warrior. How does that sound?"

"Betted" I laughed, my mood instantly brightened. But I knew It wasn't tree. "The truth probably lies somewhere in between, don't you think?"

Without taking his eyes off the vegetables, Socrates said, "I think that your 'in between' is hell, from my perspective."

Defensively I asked, "Is it just me who's the moron, or do you specialize in working with the spiritually handicapped?"

"You might say that," he smiled, pouring sesame oil into a wok and setting it on the hot plate to warm. "But nearly all of humanity shares your predicament."

"And what predicament is that?"

"I thought I had already explained that," he said patiently. "If you don't get what you want, you suffer; if you get what you don't want, you suffer; even when you get exactly what you want, you still suffer because you can't hold onto it forever. Your mind is your predicament. It wants to be free of change, free of pain, free of the obligations of life and death. But change is a law, and no amount of pretending will alter that reality."

"Socrates, you can really be depressing, you know that? I don't even think I'm hungry anymore. If life is nothing but suffering, then why bother at all?"

"Life is not suffering; it's just that you will suffer it, rather than enjoy it, until you let go of your mind's attachments and just go for the ride freely, no matter what happens."

Socrates dropped the vegetables into the sizzling wok, stirring. A delicious aroma filled the office. I relinquished all resentment, "I think I just got my appetite back." Socrates laughed as he divided the crisp vegetables onto two plates and set them on his old desk, which served as our dining table.

He ate in silence, taking small morsels with his chopsticks. I gobbled the vegetables in about thirty seconds; I guess I really was hungry. While Socrates finished his meal, I asked him, "So what are the positive uses of the mind?"

He looked up from his plate. "There aren't any." With that, he calmly returned to his meal,

"Aren't any! Socrates, that's really crazy. What about the creations of the mind? The books, libraries, arts? What about all the advances of our society that were generated by brilliant minds?"

He grinned, put down his chopsticks, and said, "There aren't any brilliant minds." Then he carried the plates to the sink.

"Socrates, :stop making these irresponsible statements and explain yourself I"

He emerged from the bathroom, bearing aloft two shining plates. "I'd better redefine some terms for you. 'Mind' is one of" those slippery terms like 'love'. The proper definition depends on your state of consciousness. Look at it this way: you have a brain that directs the body, stores information, and plays with that information. We refer to the brain's abstract processes as 'the intellect'. Nowhere have I mentioned mind. The brain and the mind are not the same. The brain is real; the mind isn't.

" 'Mind' is an illusory outgrowth of basic cerebral processes. It is like a tumor. It comprises all the random, uncontrolled thoughts that bubble into awareness from the subconscious. Consciousness is not mind; awareness is not mind; attention is not mind. Mind is an obstruction, an aggravation. It is a kind of evolutionary mistake in the human being, a primal weakness in the human experiment. I have no use for the mind."

I sat in silence, breathing slowly. I didn't exactly know what to say. Soon enough, though, words came.

"You certainly have a Unique perspective, Soc. I'm not sure

what you're talking about, but you sound really sincere."

He just smiled and shrugged.

"Soc," I continued, "Do I cut off my head to get rid of my mind?"

Smiling, he said, "That's one cure, but it has undesirable side effects. The brain can be a tool. It can recall phone numbers, solve math puzzles, or create poetry. In this way, it works for the rest of the body, like a tractor. But when you can't stop thinking of that math problem or phone number, or when troubling thoughts and memories arise without your intent, it's not your brain working, but your mind wandering. Then the mind controls you; then the tractor

has run wild."

"I get it."

"To really get it, you must observe yourself to see what I mean. You have an angry thought bubble up and you become angry. It is the same with all your emotions. They're your knee-jerk responses

to thoughts you can't control. Your thoughts are like wild monkeys stung by a scorpion.'"

"Socrates, I think..."

"You think too much!"

"I was just going to tell you that I'm really willing to change. That's one thing about me; I've always been open to change."

"That," said Socrates, "is one of your biggest illusions. You've been willing to change clothes, hairstyles, women, apartments, and jobs. You ar all too willing to change anything except yourself, but change you will. Either I help you open your eyes or time will, but time is not always gentle," he said ominously. "Take your choice. But first realize that you're in prison--then we can plot your escape.'"

With that, he pulled up to his desk, picked up a pencil, and began checking off receipts, looking like a busy executive. I got the distinct feeling I'd been dismissed for the evening. I was glad class was out.

For the next couple of days which soon stretched to weeks, I was too busy, I told myself, to drop in and visit with Socrates. But his words rattled around in my mind; I became preoccupied with its contents.

I started keeping a small notebook in which I wrote down my thoughts during the day---except for workouts, when my thoughts gave way to action. In two days I had to buy a bigger notebook; in a week, that was full. I was astounded to see the bulk and general negativity of my thought processes.

This practice increased my awareness of my mental noise; I'd turned up the volume on my thoughts that had only been subconscious background Muzak before. I stopped writing, but still the thoughts blared. Maybe Soc could help me with the volume control. I decided to visit him that night.

I found him in the garage, steam-cleaning the engine of an old Chevrolet. I was just about to speak when the small, dark-haired figure of a young woman appeared in the doorway. Not even Soe had heard her enter, which was very unusual. He saw her just before I did and glided toward her with open arms. She danced toward him and they hugged, whirling around the room. For the next few minutes, they just looked into each other's eyes. Socrates

would ask, "Yes?" and she'd answer, "Yes." It was iretty bizarre.

With
nothing else to do, I stared at her each time she whirled by. She was a little over five feet tall, sturdy looking, yet with an aura of delicate fragility. Her long black hair was tied in a bun, pulled back from a clear, shining complexion. The most noticeable feature on her face was her eyes--large, dark eyes.

My gaping must have finally caught their attention.

Socrates said, "Dan, this is Joy."

Right away, I was attracted to her. Her eyes sparkled over a sweet, slightly mischievous smile.

"Is Joy your name or a description of your mood?" I asked, trying to be clever.

"Both," she replied. She looked at Socrates; he nodded. Then she embraced me. Her arms wrapped softly around my waist in a very tender hug. All at once I felt ten times more energized than ever before; I felt comforted, healed, rested, and totally lovestruck.

Joy
looked at me with her large, luminescent eyes, and my own eyes glazed over. "The old Buddha's been putting you through the wringer, has he?" she said softly.

"Uh, I guess so." Wake up, Dan!

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"Well, the squeeze is worth it. I know, he got to me first." My mouth was too weak to ask for the details. Besides, she

turned to Socrates and said, "I'm going now. Why don't we all meet here Saturday morning at ten and go up to Tilden Park for a picnic? I'll make lunch. It looks like good weather. OK?" She looked at Soc, then at me. I nodded dumbly as she soundlessly floated out the door.

I was no help to Socrates for the rest of the evening. In fact, the rest of the week was a total loss. Finally, when Saturday came, I walked shirtless to the bus station, I was looking forward to getting some spring tan, and also hoped to impress Job' with my muscular torso.

We took the bus up to the park and walked cross-country over crackling leaves scattered in thick piles among the pine, birch, and elm tlees surrounding us. We unpacked the food on a grassy knoll in full view of the warm sun. I flopped down on the blanket, anxious to roast in the sun, and hoped Joy would join me.

Without wamlng, the wind picked up and clouds gathered. I couldn't believe it. It had begun to rain--first a drizzle, then a sudden downpour. I grabbed my shirt and put it on, cursing. Socrates only laughed.

"How can you think this is funny!" I chided him. "We're getting soaked, there's no bus for an hour, and the food's mined. Joy made the food; I'm sure she doesn't think its so., ." Joy was laughing too,

"I'm not laughing at the rain," Soe said. "I'm laughing at you." He roared, and rolled in the wet leaves. Joy started doing a dance routine to "Singin' in the Rain." Ginger Rogers and the Buddha--it was too much.

The rain ended as suddenly as it had begun. The sun broke through and soon our food and clothes were dry.

"I guess my rain dance worked." Joy took a bow.

As Joy sat behind my slumped form and gave my shoulders a rub, Socrates spoke. "It's time you began learning from your life experiences instead of complaining about them, or basking in them, Dan. Two very important lessons just offered themselves to you; they fell out of the sky, so to speak." I dug into the food, trying not to listen.

"First," he said, munching on some lettuce, "neither your disappointment nor your anger was caused by the rain."

My mouth was too full of potato salad for me to protest. Socrates continued, regally waving a carrot slice at me.

"The rain was a perfectly lawful display of nature. Your 'upset' at the mined picnic and your 'happiness' when the sun reappeared were the product of your thoughts. They had nothing to do with the actual events. Haven't you been 'unhappy' at celebrations for example? It is obvious then, that your mind, not other people or your surroundings, is the source of your moods. That is the first lesson."

Swallowing his potato salad, Soe said, "The second lesson comes from observing how you became even more angry when you noticed that I wasn't upset in the least. You began to see yourself compared to a wardor-,two warriors, if you please." He grinned at Joy. "You didn't like that, did you, Dan? It might have implied a change was necessary."

I sat morosely, absorbing what he'd said. I was hardly aware that he and Joy had darted off. Soon it was drizzling again.

Socrates and Joy came back to the blanket. Socrates started iumping up and doxn, mimicking my earlier behavior. "God damn rain." he Veiled. ""1"here goes our picfftc." He stompex back and forth, then stopped in mid-stomp, and winked at me, grinning mischievously. Then he dove onto his belly in a puddle of wet leaves and pretended to be swimming. Joy started singing, or laughing--I couldn't tell which.

I just let go then and started rolling around with them in the wet leaves, wrestling with Joy. I particularly enjoyed that part, and I think she did too. We ran and danced wildly until it was time to leave. Joy was a playful puppy--yet with all the qualities of a proud, strong woman. I was sinking fast.

As the bus rocked and rolled its way down the curving hills over/ooking the Bay, the sky turned pink and gold in the sunset. Socrates made a feeble attempt to summarize my lessons while I did my best to ignore him and snuggle with Joy in the back seat.

"Ahem--if I may have your attention," he said. He reached over, took my nose between two of his fingers, and turned my face toward him.

"Wad to you wad?" I asked. Joy was whispering in my ear as Socrates held onto my nose. "I'd rather listed to her thad to you," I said.

"She'll only lead you down the primrose path," he grinned, releasing my nose. "Even a young fool in the throes of love cannot fail to see how his mind creates both his disappointments and his---joys."

"An excellent choice of words," I said, losing myself in Joy's eyes.

As the bus rounded the bend we all sat quietly, watching San Francisco turn on her lights. The bus stopped at the bottom of the hill. Joy rose quickly and got off the bus, followed by Socrates. I started to follow, but he glanced back and said, "No." That was

all. Joy looked at me through the open window.
"Joy, when will I see you again?"
"Perhaps soon. It depends," she said.

"Depends on what?" I said. "Joy, wait, don't go. Driver, let me off!" But the bus was pulling away from them. Joy and Soc had already disappeared into the darkness.

Sunday I sank into a deep depression over which I had no con

trol. Monday in class I hardly heard a word my professor said. I was preoccupied during the workout, and my energy was drained. I'd not eaten since the picnic. I prepared myself for my Monday night gas station visit. If I found Joy there I'd make her leave with me--or I'd leave with her.

She was there, all right, laughing with Socrates when I entered the office. Feeling like a stranger, I wondered if they were laughing at me. I went in, took off my shoes, and sat.

"Well, Dan, are you any smarter than you were on Saturday?" Socrates said. Joy just smiled, but her smile hurt. "I wasn't sure you'd show up tonight, Dan, for fear I might say something you didn't want to hear." His words were like small hammers. I clenched my teeth.

"Try to relax, Dan," Joy said. I know she was trying to help, but I felt overwhelmed, criticized by both of them.

"Dan," Socrates continued, "If you remain blind to your weaknesses, you can't correct them--nor can you play up your strengths. It's just like gymnastics. Look at yourself!"

I could hardly speak. When I did, my voice quavered with ten

sion, anger, and self-pity. "I am l--looking " I didn't want

to act like this in front of her!

Blithely, Socrates went on. 'q've already told you that your compulsive attention to the mind's moods and impulses is a basic error. If you persist, you'll remain yourself--and I can't imagine a worse fate!" Socrates laughed heartily at this, and Joy nodded approvingly.

"He can be stuffy, can't he?" she grinned at Socrates.

I sat very still and clenched my fists. Finally I could speak. "I don't think either of you is very funny." I kept my voice tightly controlled,

Socrates leaned back in his chair and, with cold-blooded cruelty, said, "You're aunty, but doiu a mediocre lob of hidu it, lack ass." ("Not in front of Joy!" I thought.) "Your anger," he continued, "is proof of your stubborn illusions. Why defend a self you don't even believe in? When are you going to grow up?"

"Listen, you crazy old bastard!" I screeched. "I'm fine! I've been coming here just for kicks. And I've seen what 1 needed to see. Your world seems full of suffering, not mine. I'm depressed all right, but only when I'm here with you!"

began laugh|ng. What was wrong? I hadn't said anything funny. I went on with the story, but soon a wave of laughter spread through the auditorium. Were they all crazy, or was I?

Watkins whispered something to me, but I didn't hear. I went on pointlessly. He whispered again. "Son, I think they're laughing because your fly is open." Mortified, I glanced down and then out at the crowd. No! No, not again, not the fool again! not the jackass again! I began to cry, and the laughter died.

I ran out of the hall and through the campus until I could run no more. Two women walked by me--plastic robots, social drones. As they passed, they stared at me with distaste, then turned away.

I looked down at my dirty clothes which probably smelled. My hair was matted and uncombed; I hadn't shaved in days. I found myself in the student union without remembering how I got there, and slumped into a sticky, plastic-covered chair and fell asleep. I dreamt I was impaled on a wooden horse by a gleaming sword. The horse, affixed to a tilting carousel, whirled round and round while I desperately reached out for the ring. Melancholy music played off key, and behind the music I heard a terrible laugh. I awoke, dizzy, and stumbled home.

I'd begun to drift through the routine of school like a phantom. My world was turning inside out and upside down. I had tried to rejoin the old ways I knew, to motivate myself in my studies and training, but nothing made sense anymore.

Meanwhile, professors rattled on and on about the Renaissance, the instincts of the rat, and Milton's middle years. I walked through Sproul Plaza each day amid campus demonstrations and walked through sit-ins as if in a dream; none of it meant anything to me. Student power gave me no comfort; drugs could give me no solace. So I drifted, a stranger in a strange land, caught between two worlds without a handhold on either.

Late one afternoon I sat in a redwood grove near the bottom of campus, waiting for the darkness, thinking about the best way to kill myself. I no longer belonged on this earth. Somehow I'd lost my shoes; I had on one sock, and my feet were brown with dried blood. I felt no pain, nothing.

I decided to see Socrates one last time. I shuffled toward the station and stopped across the street. He was finishing with a car as a lady and a little girl, about four years old, walked into the station. I

don't think the woman knew Socrates; she could have been asking directions. Suddenly the little girl reached up to him. He lifted her and she threw her arms around his neck. The woman tried to pull the little girl away from Socrates, but she wouldn't let go. Socrates laughed and talked to her, setting her down gently. He knelt down and they hugged each other.

I became unaccountably sad then, and started to cry. My body shook with anguish. I turned, ran a few hundred yards and collapsed on the path. I was too weary to go home, to do anything; maybe that's what saved me.

I awoke in the infirmary. There was an I.V. needle in my arm. Someone had shaved me and cleaned me up. I felt rested, at least. I was released the next afternoon and called Cowell Health Center. "Dr. Baker, please." His secretary answered,

"'My name is Dan Millman. I'd like to make an appointment with Dr. Baker as soon as possible."

"Yes, Mr. Millman," she said in the bright, professionally friendly voice of a psychiatrist's secretary. "The doctor has an opening a week from this Tuesday at 1 P.M.; would that be all right?"

"Isn't there anything sooner?"

"I'm afraid not .... "

"I'm going to kill myself before a week from this Tuesday, lady."

"Can you come in this afternoon?" Her voice was soothing.

"'Will 2 P.M. be all right?"

"'Yes."

"Fine, see you then, Mr. Millman."

Doctor Baker was a tall, corpulent man with a slight nervous tie around his left eye. Suddenly, I didn't feel like talking to him at all. How would I begin? "Well, Herr Doktor. I have a teacher named Socrates who jumps up on rooftops--no, not off of them, that's what I'm planning to do. And, oh yes--he takes me on journeys to other places and times and I become the wind and I'm a little depressed and, yes school's fine and I'm a gymnastics star and I want to kill myself."

I stood. "Thank you for your time, doctor. I'm suddenly feeling great. I just wanted to see how the better half lived. It's been swell."

He started to speak, searching for the "right" thing to say, but I walked out, went home, and slept. For the time being, sleep seemed the easiest alternative.

That night, I dragged myself to the station. Joy was not there. Part of me suffered exquisite disappointment--I wanted so much to look into her eyes again, to hold her and be held--but part of me was relieved. It was one-on-one again--Soc and me.

When I sat down he said nothing of my absence, only, "You look tired and'depressed." He said it without a trace of pity. My eyes filled with tears.

"Yes, I'm depressed. I came to say good-bye. I owe you that. I'm stuck halfway, and I can't stand it anymore. I don't want to live."

"You're wrong about two things, Dan." He came over and sat beside me on the couch. "First, you're not halfway yet, not by a long shot. But you are very close to the end of the tunnel. And the second thing," he said, reaching for my temple, "is that you're not going to kill yourself,"

I glared at him. "Says who?" Then I realized we were no longer in the office, we were sitting in a cheap hotel room. There was no mistaking the musty smell, the thin, grey carpets, the two tiny beds, and the small, cracked, second-hand mirror.

"What's going on?" For the moment, the life was back in my voice. These journeys were always a shock to my system; I felt a rush of energy.

"A suicide attempt is in progress. Only you can stop it."
"I'm not trying to kill myself just yet," I said.

"Not you, fool. The young man outside the window, on the ledge. He's attending the University of Southern California. His name is Donald; he plays soccer and he's a philosophy major. He's in his senior year and he doesn't want to live. Go to it," Socrates

gestured toward the window.
"Socrates, I can't,"
"Then he'll die."

I looked out the window and saw, about fifteen stories below, groups of tiny people looking up from the streets of downtown Los Angeles. Peeking around the side of the window, I saw a light. haired young man in brown Levis and a T-shirt standing ten feet

away on the narrow ledge, looking down. He was getting ready to jump.

Not wanting to startle him, I called his name softly. He didn't hear me; I called again. "Donald."

He jerked his head up and almost fell. "Don't come near me!" he warned. Then, "How do you know my name?"

"A friend of mine knows you, Donald. May I sit on the ledge here and talk to you? I won't come any closer."

"No, no more words." His face was lax, his monotone voice had already lost its life.

"Denude people call you Don?"

"Yeah," he answered automatically.

"OK, Don, I guess it's your life. Anyway, 99 percent of the people in the world kill themselves."

"What the hell is that supposed to mean?" he said, an edge of life coming back into his voice. He started gripping the wall more tightly.

"Well, I'll tell you. The way most people live kills them--you know what I mean, Don? They may take thirty or forty years to kill themselves by smoking or drinking or stress or overeating, but they kill themselves just the same."

I edged a few feet closer. I had to choose my words carefully. "Don, my name is Dan. I wish we could spend more time talking we might have some things in common. I'm an athlete too, up at U.C. Berkeley."

"Well..." he stopped and started to shake.

"Listen, Don, it's getting a little scary for me to sit here on this ledge. I'm going to stand up so I can hold on to something." I stood slowly. I was shaking a little myself. "Jesus," I thought. "What am I doing out on this ledge?"

I spoke softly, trying to find a bridge to him. "Don, I hear 's going to be a beautiful sunset tonight; the Santa Ana w,.'nds are blowing some storm clouds in. Are you sure you never want to see another sunset, or sunrise? Are you sure you never want to go hiking in the mountains again?"

"I've never been up to the mountains,"

"You wouldn't believe it, Don. Everything is pure up therethe water, the air. You can smell pine needles everywhere. Maybe we could go hiking together, What do you think? Hell, if you want to